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# JAMESTOWN

1607



1907

Published by  
The American Scenic and Historic  
Preservation Society  
New York: 1902



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1607

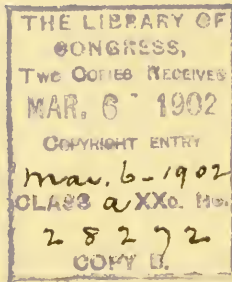
A SKETCH OF THE  
HISTORY AND PRES-  
ENT CONDITION OF  
THE SITE OF THE  
FIRST PERMANENT  
ENGLISH SETTLE-  
MENT IN AMERICA

1907

BY

EDWARD HAGAMAN HALL

Published by  
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NEW YORK, N. Y

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ANCIENT CHURCH TOWER AT JAMESTOWN  
(Date about 1639)



TOWER AND EARTHWORKS OF CIVIL WAR





"As in the arts and sciences the first invention is of more consequence than all the improvements afterward, so in kingdoms the first foundation or plantation is of more noble dignity and merit than all that followeth."—*Sir Francis Bacon.*

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"Jamestown and Plymouth's hallowed rock  
To me shall ever sacred be;  
I care not who my theme may mock,  
Or sneer at them and me.  
I envy not the brute who here can stand  
Without a thrill for his own native land."  
—*James Kirke Paulding.*

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Here the old world first met the new. Here the white man first met the red for settlement and civilization. Here the white man wielded the axe to cut the first tree for the first log cabin. Here the first log cabin was built for the first village. Here the first village rose to the first State capital. Here was the first capital of our empire of States. Here was the very foundation of a nation of freemen, which has stretched its millions and its dominion across the continent to the shores of another ocean. Go to the Pacific now to measure the progression and power of a great people."—*Gov. Henry A. Wise of Virginia.*

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## Jamestown.

ON MAY 13TH, 1607, the first permanent English settlement within the boundaries of the present United States of America was made in longitude  $76^{\circ} 46'$  west of Greenwich and latitude  $37^{\circ} 12'$  north of the equator, upon a peninsula adjoining the northern shore of a tide-water river called Powhatan, in the Province of Virginia, about 50 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. The river was thereupon named James River, and the settlement Jamestown, in honor of the reigning monarch of England, James I.

The soil of Jamestown thus gave root to the first successful planting of Anglo-Saxon civilization in the New World, and became the garden of our people's infancy in the Western Hemisphere.

Since then, great events have rolled over Jamestown's historic acres. Across them tramped the armies that brought into being our independent Nation, and upon them stand the battlemented memorials of the later struggle that confirmed the Nation's Unity. The little Colony of 1607 has grown into one of the dominant powers of the earth; but Jamestown herself is no more. She is a vanished city, partly buried in the earth, partly submerged in the river; for that which was once a peninsula is now an Island, completely severed from the

mainland and steadily disappearing under the ceaseless gnawing of the surrounding stream. Upon the shores one may gather, like crumbs dropped from the river's greedy maw, pieces of brick from the foundations of the houses that sheltered the pioneers, beads with which they bartered with the aborigines, and stems and bowls of the tobacco pipes with which they consoled their hours of suffering. A hundred and fifty feet from the encroaching waves a few quaint grave-stones with silent eloquence attest the mortality of an heroic generation, and a solitary and impressive church tower bespeaks the inspiration that sustained it through its sufferings. But that is all that is visible of ancient Jamestown—all that remains above the soil as a physical reminder of that thrilling opening chapter of our national history which records the phenomenal faith, daring and endurance by which a new civilization was planted in this western wilderness three centuries ago.

In 1907, the people of the United States, under the leadership of the people of Virginia, will celebrate with becoming ceremonies the tercentenary of the settlement of Jamestown. Moved by the approach of this significant anniversary and the threatened obliteration of the site of the event which it will commemorate, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society has memorialized Congress to purchase the Island, believing that due respect for our national traditions and a justifiable pride in the annals of our race demand that it should be taken into the care of the Federal Government as a National Park, rescued from vandalism and



RUINS OF AMBLER (JACQUELIN) MANSION  
(Site of House of Burgesses)



PROCESS OF EROSION IN ALL STAGES





tholomew Gosnold and John Ratcliffe. Newport commanded the fleet, which carried 105 men besides the crews. There were no women in the company. Among the voyagers was a veteran campaigner who was destined to have a great influence on the future destiny of the Colony, Capt. John Smith. While the expedition dawdled along through the West Indies, dissensions arose, and when it arrived off the Virginia capes, April 26th, 1607, Smith was in irons.

A landing was made on a sandy point which they named Cape Henry, after the Prince of Wales, and upon which they erected a cross. A tablet on the Cape Henry light-house erected by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities commemorates that fact. Upon opening their sealed instructions, the voyagers found that Newport, Gosnold, Ratcliffe, Smith, Edward Wingfield, John Martin and George Kendall had been appointed members of the first Council for the government of the Colony. Wingfield became the first President of the Council.

Seventeen days were spent in exploring the surrounding waters in accordance with the written instructions of the Company to seek a river which promised to give passage to the South Sea. As they touched the cape at the entrance to Hampton Roads, they found the place so comfortable after their trials at sea that they named it Point Comfort; and it is very generally believed that Newport News honors the name of the commander of the fleet, whose subsequent trips back and forth between Virginia and England for supplies of food and

colonists contributed so materially to the perpetuation of the settlement of Jamestown.\*

About 30 miles up-stream beyond Point Comfort, on the northern shore of the River James, on the concave side of a great bend, the explorers came to a peninsula about three miles long and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  wide at its widest part. It lay in a generally northwesterly and southeasterly direction, and at its northwestern end was connected by a narrow isthmus with the mainland. The James River is here from  $1\frac{1}{8}$  to  $3\frac{1}{4}$  miles wide. The widest measurement is S S E. from Lower Point; the narrowest is almost due west from Church Point to Swan's Point on the opposite shore. As might be expected, the greatest depth of water is in the narrow channel, where the present maximum depth is 81 feet; while in the widest channel the maximum is at present only 21 feet, rapidly shallowing as one goes down stream to only 18 or 19 feet.

In 1607 the voyagers found deep water close to the western shore of the peninsula, which enabled them to moor their vessels directly to the trees, and this fact appears to have been the factor which determined them to land there, in spite of their written directions not to "plant in a low, moist place," for the peninsula was a

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\*John Fiske inclines toward the belief that this is the origin of Newport News, and says that the spelling "Newport Ness" which appears on some old maps is the equivalent of "Newport Point." President Lyon G. Tyler of William and Mary College, however, traces the name to Port Newce, Ireland, whence Daniel Gookin transported some cattle and emigrants to Virginia in 1620, naming his Virginia landing-place New Port Newce.



low alluvial deposit, penetrated by marshes here and there. The subject was discussed with considerable zeal at the time, and the decision to land there was by no means unanimous. On May 13th, however, the die was cast, and the colonists landed on the western end of the peninsula, where it was highest, and on the following day began to build a triangular fort called Fort James. Subsequently the place was named Jamestown.

This, then, was the *beginning of English-speaking America*.

Contemporary with it was the *first regular establishment of the Protestant religion in America*, under the auspices of the Church of England and the ministrations of the Rev. Robert Hunt. The first church was a sail-cloth suspended from trees, and the pulpit a board fastened between two of them.

The little colony that landed here amid the blossoms of spring appears to have fared as badly as that which landed at Plymouth Rock 13 years later amid the rigors of a New England winter. Their first summer was a hard one. Lack of harmony among themselves and an aversion from work were two causes contributing to their misfortunes. Death, in the form of fevers, starvation and the Indians, reaped large harvests, and by September one-half were dead. By that time, also, President Wingfield had been deposed, Councilor Gosnold had died, and Councilor Kendall had been shot for alleged mutiny.

Had not the colony's numbers and stores been replenished from time to time, it would quickly have disap-

peared, like the lost colony planted by Raleigh on Roanoke Island 20 years before. Newport remained only long enough to explore the James with Smith as far as the falls at the present site of Richmond, and to see Smith admitted to the Council, when, on June 22d, he sailed for England. By January 8th, 1608, he was back with the First Supply, so-called, not only bringing provisions, but adding 120 persons to the 38 survivors then remaining, making the population 158. On April 10th he was off again for England and back once more in October with the Second Supply. This added 70 persons to the population, which had fallen off to 130, making a total of 200. And in August, 1609, the Third Supply arrived, adding 300 to the population.

Next to Newport's Supplies, the perpetuation of the colony appears to have been due to Smith's activities in exploring the surrounding country and getting corn from the natives. Smith's expeditions, however, were far from being pleasure trips, and were diversified by some notable experiences. On December 10th, 1607, he started to explore the Chickahominy River, with two white companions. The two companions were soon killed by the Indians, and Smith saved himself from his assailants' arrows by tying his Indian guide in front of him with his garter, for a shield, while he manipulated his gun with his free hands. When, at length, he was captured, he saved himself from immediate death by mystifying his captors with the quivering needle of his pocket compass. Taken, finally, to Powhatan, at Weromocomoco, on the northern shore of the York River,

about 15 miles northeast of Jamestown, January 5th, 1608, he was condemned to death, and was about to be executed, when Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas, besought his life, and he was spared once more. Conducted back to Jamestown, January 8th, by Powhatan's representatives, instead of finding the colony a haven of safety, he was confronted with the extraordinary charge of murder under the Levitical Law in having been responsible for the death of his two white companions, and was sentenced to death by his enemies in the Council. The timely arrival of Newport with the First Supply, on the same day, saved him once more, and preserved to the colony the services of one of the most practical, energetic and helpful men it ever had. In the summer of 1608 Smith made two voyages up the Chesapeake Bay, and sent to England his famous and wonderfully accurate map of Virginia, which alone is a monument to his energy and powers of accurate observation. His later services, in collecting corn from the Indians for the sustenance of the starving colony, were of vital consequence in maintaining unbroken the thread of Jamestown's existence.

Among those who came over in the Second Supply was Ann Burras, who, in December, 1608, was married in the Jamestown Church to John Laydon. This is the *first recorded English wedding on American soil*. In September, 1609, while coming down the James in a boat, Smith was badly wounded by an explosion of gunpowder, and had to sail for England in October for surgical aid. Had he been in Jamestown the following

winter of 1609-10, he might have mitigated the sufferings of that horrible period known to history as the Starving Time. As it was, when the colonists had eaten all their corn, they could get no more. For a while they subsisted on roots and herbs, eked out, possibly, with a few shell- and other fish. Then hunger converted some of them into cannibals. A slain Indian was boiled and eaten. One man, bereft of reason, killed his wife, salted her corpse, and had eaten a part of it before he was discovered. Whereupon his comrades, who appear still to have retained some of their natural instincts of horror, took the uxoricide and burned him at the stake. When, on May 10th, 1610, the pinnaces *Patience* and *Deliverance*, with names of strange significance, arrived with a belated part of the Third Supply, they found only 60 feeble and half crazed survivors at Jamestown.

The thread of the colony's existence had now become so tenuous that it had nearly reached the breaking point, and had not a most fortunate event occurred, the continuity of the colony's life would have been interrupted, and the first permanent English settlement must have been recorded later and probably elsewhere. On Thursday, June 7th, 1610, the colonists gave way to despair, took their supplies aboard ship, buried their cannon within the fort, and started down the river, en route for England. That night they halted at Mulberry Island. The next day they were met in Hampton Roads by three ships of Lord Delaware. Whereupon, they put back to Jamestown, and on Sunday, the 10th, were

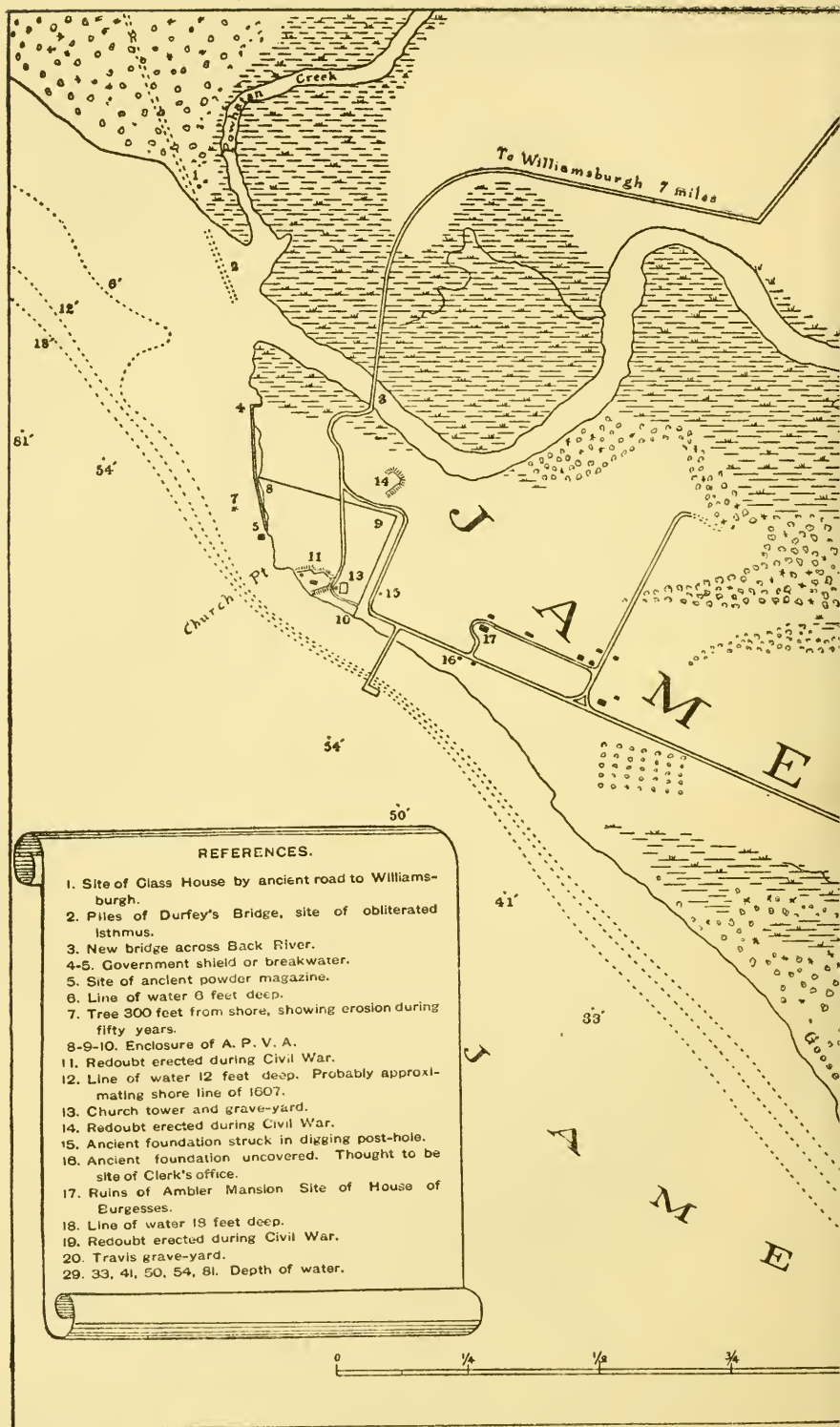
on the Peninsula again. Lord Delaware, as he stepped ashore, fell on his knees and gave thanks; and well he might, for Virginia was saved.

The winter of 1610-11 was another hard one, but nothing ever equaled the awful Starving Time. Gradually things improved. Order was evolved out of chaos. Shiftlessness was ended by some vigorous and judicious Governors. The people began to prosper and the colony to develop offshoots in the shape of neighboring settlements. The Indians were gradually crowded back, but not without terrible and desperate efforts on their part to hold their ground against the pathfinders and plowmen of the new civilization. The attack on Jamestown in the year of settlement and the slaughter of Ratcliffe and 30 men in 1610 were insignificant compared with later massacres.

Powhatan, the great Indian chief, was not altogether unfriendly toward the whites, as was evidenced by his consent to the marriage of his daughter Pocahontas to John Rolfe. The wedding, which took place after she had been baptized into the Christian faith, was celebrated in the midst of a picturesque gathering of red and white men, in the Jamestown church, about April 5th, 1614. This was the *first conversion to Christianity and baptism of an Indian within the limits of the original English colonies*. It was also, it is believed, the *first recorded lawful marriage between white man and Indian* in the limits of the present United States.

In 1615, *fixed individual property rights in the soil were first established* by the London Company grant-





#### REFERENCES.

1. Site of Glass House by ancient road to Williamsburgh.
2. Piles of Durfey's Bridge, site of obliterated isthmus.
3. New bridge across Back River.
- 4-5. Government shield or breakwater.
5. Site of ancient powder magazine.
6. Line of water 6 feet deep.
7. Tree 300 feet from shore, showing erosion during fifty years.
- 8-9-10. Enclosure of A. P. V. A.
11. Redoubt erected during Civil War.
12. Line of water 12 feet deep. Probably approximating shore line of 1607.
13. Church tower and grave-yard.
14. Redoubt erected during Civil War.
15. Ancient foundation struck in digging post-hole.
16. Ancient foundation uncovered. Thought to be site of Clerk's office.
17. Ruins of Ambler Mansion Site of House of Burgesses.
18. Line of water 18 feet deep.
19. Redoubt erected during Civil War.
20. Travis grave-yard.
29. 33, 41, 50, 54, 81. Depth of water.



Neck of Land

Mill Creek

Glebe Land

Back River

Archer's  
Hope

High and Low Swamp

S  
T  
O  
W  
N  
Black  
Point

R  
I  
V  
E  
R

Lower Point

ing 50 acres of land to every freeman in absolute right.

For eight years after the marriage of Rolfe and Pocahontas comparative peace reigned between the natives and the new comers. Rolfe and his dusky bride lived happily about 50 miles above Jamestown on the James River at Varina until 1616, when he took his wife to England. There she was received and treated as a princess, creating a very favorable impression. As the couple were about to embark for Virginia again, Pocahontas suddenly died, and was buried in the church-yard at Gravesend, Eng., March 21st, 1617. In the following year, her venerable father, the powerful Powhatan, followed her to the grave.

Either as a coincidence with or as a consequence of the death of these two, relations with the Indians then became strained, and in 1622 the slumbering hatred of the red men for the white broke forth like a volcano in a terrible massacre, in which 347 settlers outside of Jamestown perished. Twenty-two years later occurred another slaughter, in which about 300 perished, but in this case, as in the massacre of 1622, Jamestown was warned in time and escaped unharmed.

Something of the sacrifice involved in the founding of Jamestown is indicated by the fact that out of 14,000 emigrants sent over from 1607 to 1622, only 911 were alive at the end of the massacre of the latter year. Despite these terrible drawbacks, the colony was making progress. In 1619 the London Company had elected



as Treasurer Sir Edwin Sandys, a progressive man and opponent of the King. He believed that the colony could succeed only through home rule. Consequently Governor Yeardley was instructed to issue writs for the election of a General Assembly of Virginia; and on July 30th, 1619, more than a year before the landing at Plymouth Rock, the *first representative legislature in America* assembled in the Jamestown Church. The legislature was called the House of Burgesses.

The same year, 1619, witnessed two other events—one of picturesque interest, one of far-reaching importance. The first was the arrival at Jamestown of a ship-load of respectable maidens, who, with some latitude of choice, were disposed of to colonists who could pay 120 pounds of tobacco apiece for their traveling expenses. Upon this incident turns the plot of Mary Johnston's novel, "To Have and to Hold."\* The second incident was the arrival of a Dutch man-of-war, from which were purchased 20 negro slaves. In striking contrast with the establishment of the first free legislature, occurred that year *the introduction of negro slavery* into Virginia.

In 1624, the *first resistance to taxation without representation* was made at Jamestown, when the legislature forbade the Governor to lay any taxes that it had not authorized.

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\*John Fiske gives the date 1619 in his "Old Virginia and Her Neighbors." Winsor's Narrative and Critical History says 1621.

In 1635 occurred the *first rebellion in America*, when John Harvey, the Governor, was arrested for treason and sent to England for betraying the interests of Virginia in the controversy between her and Maryland.

In 1676 occurred Bacon's Rebellion, led by Nathaniel Bacon, Jr., and caused by Governor Sir Wm. Berkeley's refusal to allow the outlying colonists to organize themselves for defense against the Indians. On September 19th, 1676, Bacon burned Jamestown, including the church and House of Burgesses, the total loss being estimated at 150,000 pounds of tobacco.

In March, 1679, the council ordered that "Jamestown be rebuilt and be the Metropolis of Virginia, as the most ancient and convenient place." But a book full of laws could not overcome the error in the location of the first settlement; and while the town was rebuilt after the fire of 1676, the "Metropolis" never materialized. In its palmyest days, Jamestown probably never contained more than three or four score houses and a resident population of over 250. In 1609 there was a strongly palisaded fort, in and about which were 50 or 60 fragile cabins, a church, a store house and a magazine. In 1625 there were 22 dwellings, a church, a merchants' store, 3 store-houses, a guard-house, and, outside the town, two block-houses—one to guard the isthmus, and the other to prevent Indians from swimming across the Back River, which separated the peninsula from the mainland. The population of the peninsula was then 221. In 1662 an act was passed for the erection of 32 brick houses, 40 by 20 inside measure-

ment, but in 1676 there were only 16 or 18 houses besides the church, mostly of brick. At one time the town was laid out in two or three streets, with door-yards and gardens, and doubtless presented an attractive appearance; but the exact ground plan of the town is wrapped in mystery, and can only be discovered by systematic excavations, which it is hoped may be made if the Government purchases Jamestown Island for a National Reservation. In 1722, according to the Rev. Hugh Jones, Jamestown was "an abundance of brick rubbish with three or four inhabited houses."\* The present aspect of Jamestown is described further on.

With the physical decadence of the town came also its political decline. In 1698 the State House was burned again, and in 1699 the seat of government was moved to the Middle Plantations, as Williamsburgh was called on account of its location midway between the James and York Rivers. Jamestown now lost its pre-eminence as the capital, but for three-quarters of a century longer maintained a relic of its former individuality by having a representative in the House of Burgesses. By the Constitution adopted during the Revolution it lost even that distinction, and its political and material glory may be said then to have departed.

But its historical importance, on the contrary, was destined to receive accessions. Lying at the southern

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\*There are evidences on the island which suggest that Jamestown City was more extensive than historical descriptions indicate, and if the site should ever be excavated systematically, it might be necessary to revise accepted statements.

end of the ancient road which crossed the famous York Peninsula, leading to Williamsburgh midway and to Yorktown on the York River, Jamestown was a notable landmark in the plans of the southern campaigners of both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.

In 1781 Cornwallis' last fight, before he took his final and fatal stand at Yorktown, was at Jamestown Ford. Lafayette and Wayne, with about 5,000 men, had closely chased Cornwallis down the Peninsula from Richmond, when, on July 6th, 1781, the British General laid a trap for his pursuers at the Jamestown causeway. Concealing the principal part of his army on the mainland, he stationed a smaller part on the Jamestown Peninsula and conspicuously displayed them as a decoy. The Americans were at first deceived into believing that a few Redcoats who were exhibited on the mainland were the rear guard of Cornwallis' army, and it was not until they found themselves fiercely engaged with the bulk of the enemy's force that they realized their mistake. The Americans suffered a tactical defeat, but a strategic victory, for during that night Cornwallis took his whole army over onto the little peninsula, and three days later continued his retrograde by crossing the James and marching to Portsmouth. The Americans lost in this engagement 118 killed, wounded and prisoners, and the British 80. Fifteen weeks later Cornwallis surrendered and American Independence was won, within 19 miles of the spot where English civilization was first permanently planted in America by the Mother Country.

According to Thatcher's Military Journal, only two houses were then standing at Jamestown, and these are supposed to have been the Jacquelin (Ambler) Mansion, on the foundations of the old House of Burgesses, near the western end, and the Travis Mansion, near the eastern end. The former had been burned by the British in 1776, but rebuilt on the old foundations in 1780.

In the Civil War, Jamestown, then an island, was promptly seized upon as a point of great strategic importance, and heavy earthworks were erected thereon—one commanding the approach from the mainland on the north, one on Church Point, and one near the east end, the latter two commanding the passage of the river. These earthen fortifications still remain, impressive memorials of the deadly storm that raged over the historic Virginia Peninsula and James River in the days of '61 and '65. Although there is more than 81 feet of water off the western end of the island, the river sounds less than 20 feet between the eastern end and the opposite shore; and it was because the famous Confederate ironclad Merrimac could not cross these flats that the men in gray blew her up in 1862, when they withdrew to Richmond.

Jamestown has passed through the hands of many owners, most of whom have manifested little regard for its sacred associations. In 1892, however, it was purchased by the late Edward Everett Barney and his wife, Mrs. Louise J. Barney. The latter, now living at Meadowville, Va., with great public spirit cleared up the island, took measures to preserve the ruins,



constructed a substantial road the whole length of the island, built a new 250-foot bridge across Back River to the mainland, and a 500-foot dock on the James River for steamboats, and in 1893 donated  $22\frac{1}{2}$  acres at the western end to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities.

The island is estimated to contain from 1,500 to 1,600 acres, three-quarters of which is arable. It is indented on the north and east by fingers of marsh-land occupying about a quarter of the area, which can readily be reclaimed by modern methods of diking and drainage, such as are employed on neighboring river-lands. The soil is fertile, and amply rewards the cultivator of an extensive dairy and truck farm. Here and there groves of noble pines, intermixed with oaks and other deciduous trees, diversify the landscape. There are only about twenty buildings on the island now. At the western end, within the A. P. V. A. enclosure, is one house hidden behind the massive earthen walls of a fort of the Civil War. A few feet east of the fort rises the venerable brick tower of the ancient church. The tower is 18 feet square, 36 feet high, with walls three feet thick, and crumbled at the top. It is three stories high. The first story is pierced by doorways in the eastern and western walls. The second story contains an arched window above each doorway, but the masonry is absent from the wall space between each window and the door below, thus merging each pair of openings in one, about 12 feet high. The third story is perforated by two loop-holes for guns on each of the four sides. The date

of the erection of the church is uncertain, but it is believed to have been begun about 1639. The ground adjacent to the tower on the east has been excavated, disclosing the foundations of two churches, the smaller inside of the larger. The larger measures 56 by 28 feet and shows the bases of four buttresses on each side. Over these foundations the A. P. V. A. have erected a wooden shed. Adjoining to this are the remains of the ancient grave-yard, the tomb-stones of which are being restored by the same association.

A quarter of a mile southeast of the tower stand the ruins of the Ambler or Jacquelin Mansion, on foundations originally built in 1640 for the House of Burgeses. The structure on this site has been destroyed by fire several times. As before stated, it was burned in 1776 by the British, but rebuilt. It was burned again in 1862, but rebuilt. And it was burned once more in 1895. Its ragged but massive brick walls still attest the dignity of the building. Seven-eighths of a mile southeast of these ruins is an earthwork of the Civil War, about 300 feet square. At the extreme southeastern end of the island is the ancient Travis burial ground.

The population of the island at present consists of a farmer's family and a few helpers, perhaps a couple of dozen persons in all.

But while the surface indications of ancient Jamestown are few, the ground is a rich treasury of relics of the past, for Jamestown is a veritable buried city, and the plow and spade unearth memorials which bring

before us with startling vividness the generation of John Smith and other fathers of the colony. Pieces of armor, a halberd, sword hilts, spiked balls; gold, silver and copper coins; a pewter basin and other domestic utensils; small white and red clay pipes, in which the grateful properties of tobacco were first enjoyed by the white men; skeletons and coffin handles; glass bottles beautifully iridescent from long burial in the earth; glass beads, striped like goose-berries;\* fragments of stained glass from the old church windows; bits of charcoal, recalling Jamestown's fiery trials—these and many other mementoes are among the smaller objects exhumed.

In various parts of the island, ancient brick foundations have been struck and more or less uncovered. The very interesting church foundations have already been mentioned. About 200 feet southwest of the Ambler ruins, the brick foundations of a house, 20 by 34 inside measurement, have been uncovered. They are thought to be the substructure of the old clerk's office. Enough has been revealed in different parts of the island to arouse the intensest interest of the historian and antiquarian. No street plan of ancient Jamestown is known to exist, and students who have tried to con-

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\*Doubtless products of the first glass factory in America. In October, 1608, the Second Supply brought over eight Dutchmen and Poles, "skillful workmen from foreign parts," to teach the colonists how to make glass, tar, pitch, and soap ashes. In 1621 four Italians were brought over to promote glass-making. The glass-house was located on the mainland just across the isthmus. See map.



struct it from property descriptions have been baffled by their indefiniteness. It is believed that systematic and scientific excavations would reveal the original ground plan of Jamestown, and throw a flood of light on many obscure details of its history!

From the latter statement, however, must be excepted that portion already obliterated by the river. This erosion of the island is the most lamentable chapter of the story. It has been going on apparently at the rate of about six feet a year. The outline of the western end of the peninsula at the time of settlement was probably not far from the line on the accompanying map indicating the limit of the 12-foot soundings of the river. This varies from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  of a mile from the present shore. As stated at the beginning of this brochure, Jamestown Island, which is an alluvial deposit, was a peninsula in 1607. At the extreme northwestern end it was connected with the mainland immediately west of the mouth of Powhatan Creek by an isthmus from 50 to 100 feet wide. Powhatan Creek then emptied into Back River, which was, in reality, the continuation of the Creek to the James. The isthmus and western end of the island, ceaselessly pounded by the gigantic water-hammer of the James, which strikes it with the undiminished momentum of a direct current for seven miles, has nothing in its composition to withstand this onslaught. Consequently, the isthmus was washed away, and the James had a free course north as well as south of the island. In 1781, according to Tarleton's "Campaigns," the island was "separated from the main-

land by a small gut of water, not two feet wide at the reflex of the tide." In the time of the Revolution, the submerged neck of land\* was called Jamestown Ford. In 1836-37, Col. Goodrich Durfey built a bridge over the ford; but just prior to Lossing's visit in 1848 a tremendous storm swept it away. The piles of the bridge are still visible, as indicated on the accompanying map. To-day, it would take a bridge a quarter of a mile long to cross the expanse of water at the same point. Instead of this, Mrs. Barney has erected a bridge about  $\frac{3}{8}$  of a mile east of the site of the Durfey bridge, crossing the Back River where it is but 250 feet wide.

The loss of the isthmus would be of little account if, under the same influences, the island itself had not been wasting away. All that portion of the island lying west of a line drawn due south from the mouth of Powhatan Creek has been eroded, and the Creek now empties directly into the James. In 1805, the erosion had advanced so far that the stumps of the palisades erected by the first settlers for their protection against the Indians could be seen at low tide, 150 or 200 paces from the shore. Since 1846, the shore for a distance of 300 feet inland has been washed away, as is proven by an old cypress tree, now 300 feet out in the river, which in 1846 was on the shore almost beyond the

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\*Readers of Jamestown history should be careful to discriminate between the expression "neck of land" as applied to the isthmus connecting Jamestown Peninsula with the mainland, and the proper name Neck of Land, applied to that portion of the mainland lying between Powhatan Creek and Mill Creek.



reach of high tide. In that year, when the high tides were just beginning to lap the ground around the old cypress, there stood, southeast of it and 300 feet still further inland, a picturesque old brick powder magazine, which is said to have been built by Capt. John Smith, and the walls of which bore the marks of many a conflict. In 1890, the river had eaten its way up to this magazine, thus verifying the rate of progress indicated by the immersion of the cypress tree. The magazine walls crumbled away, leaving the foundation visible for awhile a few feet from shore, but now it is completely obliterated.

As the river's inroads progress, brick foundations of dwellings and other relics are exposed and carried away. The farmer's children walk along the shore and pick up beads, pipe stems, and other mementoes of the distant past, and use them for playthings.

In 1895, Congress appropriated \$10,000 for the protection of the island, and the money was spent in laying a number of large flat stones along the sands of the western shore; but the river, after licking the stones awhile, like some monster preparing its food for digestion, simply swallowed up the stones and most of them disappeared. Then Congress appropriated \$15,000, which was more wisely expended in a scientifically constructed shield or breakwater of masonry, 1299 feet long, as shown on the accompanying map. But this protection, excellent in quality, is too small in quantity, and if the Government does not take the island and, by liberal treatment, preserve it as one of the most precious

heirlooms of the Nation, the graves surrounding the venerable church tower will soon yield up their dead to the greedy waves, and the great tower itself, the silent witness of nearly three centuries of our national growth, will bend its lofty head to the conquering river.

As the fate of ancient Troy was summed up in the two words, "Troja fuit," so we may say of Jamestown *the city*, "Jamestown was." But *historic* Jamestown *is*, and lives mightily to-day in the hearts of the American people, in the institutions of their government, in the civilization of a hemisphere. Jamestown City lies buried in Jamestown Island. Let a grateful and reverent Nation, through its Congress, say to the surrounding river, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther;" and let it preserve forever, as a sacred place, the islet that was consecrated by the sacrifices and sufferings of a generation of heroes, and that entombs the bones and sacred memorials of the pathfinders of Anglo-Saxon America.

MAR 7 - 1902





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